

Washington, DC -- Representatives Vern Buchanan (R-FL), Gus Bilirakis (R-FL) and Christopher Shays (R-CT) today introduced four bills which will make practical fixes to help wounded service members and their families more easily navigate the Department of Defense (DoD) medical system.

Buchanan introduced H.R. 1579, which creates a standard Soldier Patient Tracking System so any patient can be located in the medical holdover (MHO) process by a family member, installation commander, patient advocate or ombudsman office representative.

“Members of our armed forces who have volunteered their service and sacrificed their health to help ensure our freedom and security deserve the best possible care,” said Buchanan. “They should not be left alone to navigate a bureaucratic system that leaves them in limbo and sometimes denies them the health care and benefits that they have earned. By making available important information regarding the status of a patient’s claim, this bill will help cut through the red tape to ensure that our wounded soldiers are provided with the first-class medical care they deserve in a timelier manner.”

Bilirakis introduced H.R. 1580, which creates a DoD ombudsman to provide oversight of the process, answering and assisting all patient and family questions concerning MHO administrative processes, and financial and non-military related services available to help throughout a patient’s recovery.

“America’s wounded warriors deserve the finest medical care possible. I am proud to be part of the solution to the appalling and unacceptable conditions at Walter Reed by working with my colleagues to introduce legislation that will move us on the path towards resolving this situation. H.R. 1580, the Ombudsman legislation I am introducing will create a single point of reference for soldiers, veterans and their families to ensure they are receiving prompt responses and information to their questions. America’s finest deserve the best medical care possible and I call on all my colleagues, Democratic and Republican, to work together to solve this problem and honor our veterans’ sacrifices.”

Shays, Ranking Member of the Oversight and Government Reform Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs, introduced H.R. 1577, which creates a DoD Patient Navigators program for wounded service members. The Navigators will be representatives for patients and

their families, independent of current military service and DoD processing authorities. Shays also introduced H.R. 1578, which establishes, publishes and monitors MHO process performance standards , which will allow patients, their families, case managers and others who need to know where the process stands and how to keep it moving.

“The disgraces at Walter Reed illustrated the need for some common-sense fixes to the DoD patient care system. We need to move forward with them now, in order to quickly streamline the process for our service members caught in the bureaucratic maze,” Shays said. “The Patient Navigators program adds oversight and advocacy from outside the current stovepiped system and we want to establish some performance standards for medical holdovers.”